

SCOTTSDALE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION REPORT

To: Transportation Commission
From: Paul Basha, Transportation Director
Subject: Transportation Master Plan – Future Rail Options
Meeting Date: 21 January 2016



ITEM IN BRIEF

Action: Transportation Master Plan, Transit Element, Rail Options for discussion and direction.

Purpose:

At the Transportation Commission meeting of 17 December 2015, the Commission directed the Transportation Department to prepare options for potential future rail routes in Scottsdale. The Transportation Commission has previously voted to include potential rail routes in the 2016 Transportation Master Plan. The Transportation Commission is tentatively scheduled to vote on a recommendation to the City Council at the 4 February Commission meeting. The intent of the 21 January discussion is for the Commission to provide direction to the Transportation Department on the rail route(s) they wish to include in the 2016 Transportation Master Plan.

Recommendation:

The Transportation Department recommends that, if the Transportation Commission includes future potential rail routes in the 2016 Transportation Master Plan, that the route be the "Scottsdale-McDowell Route".

Discussion:

Attached to this memorandum are PowerPoint slides indicating potential rail route concepts previously discussed by the Transportation Commission. Any potential rail alignment(s) included in the 2016 Transportation Master Plan would require extensive discussion and collaboration with Valley Metro, the City of Phoenix, and the City of Tempe in the next few years. The potential rail alignment(s) included in the 2016 Transportation Master Plan would require extensive discussion with Scottsdale residents, property owners, and business owners in the next few years. Whatever is proposed will undergo a thorough Federal Transit Administration Alternatives Analysis to determine community environmental impacts, benefits, and costs.

Slide 3 provides the most basic suggestion. This concept suggests that the City of Scottsdale evaluate potential rail routes in two corridors: Scottsdale Road, from Chaparral Road to McKellips Road, and McDowell Road from 64th Street to Granite Reef Road.

Slide 4 provides five alignments that have been presented and discussed during previous Commission meetings. Two alignments are suggested – one on Goldwater Boulevard beginning at Scottsdale Fashion Square then continuing on Scottsdale Road to McKellips Road connecting to the existing Light Rail Station at Rural Road and University Drive, and the other alignment on Scottsdale Road from McDowell Road to McKellips Road also connecting to the existing Light Rail Station at Rural Road and University Drive. Another alignment is suggested on 68th Street from Scottsdale Fashion Square to Roosevelt Road connecting to the planned Tempe Modern Streetcar route. Two alignments are suggested on McDowell Road – both beginning near the General Dynamics facility at Granite Reef Road. One McDowell Road alignment continues west of 64th Street, eventually curving south connecting to the current SkyTrain station at 44th Street and Washington Street. The other McDowell Road alignment curves south on 64th Street (Galvin Parkway) connecting to the existing Light Rail Route at the Priest Drive and Washington Street station. Both McDowell Road routes would join the existing Light Rail Route into Phoenix.

Slide 5 is similar to slide 4, except the potential route on 68th Street is eliminated.

Slide 6 provides only the suggested Scottsdale Road route from McDowell Road to McKellips Road connecting to the Rural / University Light Rail station.

Slide 7 provides two suggested alignments: Scottsdale Road route from McDowell Road to McKellips Road to the Rural / University Light Rail Station, and McDowell Road from Granite Reef Road to Galvin Parkway to the Priest / Washington Light Rail station.

Slide 8 provides one alignment beginning at Scottsdale Fashion Square on Goldwater Boulevard to Scottsdale Road to McDowell Road to Galvin Parkway to connect to the existing Light Rail Route at the Priest / Washington station.

Slide 9 provides one alignment beginning at Scottsdale Fashion Square on Goldwater Boulevard to Scottsdale Road to McDowell Road to 64th Street to connect to the SkyTrain station at 44th Street and Washington Street.

To ensure that the alignments depicted on slides 8 and 9 are feasible, the Transportation Department examined the existing Light Rail Line curve at the Central Avenue and Washington Street intersection. This existing curve is depicted on Slide 10. This curvilinear alignment was then superimposed on the Scottsdale Road and McDowell Road intersection depicted on Slide 11. This cursory examination suggests a light rail alignment curving through the Scottsdale / McDowell intersection appears feasible.

Slide 12 provides an aerial photograph of the area bounded by McDowell Road, Scottsdale Road, Rio Salado, and 44th Street.

Including potential rail alignment(s) in the 2016 Transportation Master Plan, when adopted by the Scottsdale City Council, would formally indicate that the City of Scottsdale wishes to consider future rail route(s) with the stated corridor/ preference(s). The Federal Transit Administration process would require detailed analyses of all rail alternative alignments, impacts, benefits, and costs.

If the Transportation Commission recommends that a rail route(s) be included in the 2016 Transportation Master Plan, the Transportation Department suggests the Scottsdale-McDowell alignment, depicted on Slide 9, appears to be the most viable option. This route provides direct commuter, retail employee, retail consumer, and tourist connection between Scottsdale and Phoenix, and Sky Harbor Airport. While the McDowell Road alignment appears to parallel the existing Light Rail Route for a short distance, it would actually serve a geographically separated corridor with current high bus ridership and development opportunities for both Phoenix and Scottsdale.